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LI CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION DISCUSSES EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WITH COUNTY EXECS LEVY AND SUOZZI

Long Island's Top Officials Meet in Nation's Capital to Discuss Regional Readiness

WASHINGTON, DC - In a meeting on Capitol Hill today, Representatives Peter King, Gary Ackerman, Steve Israel, Carolyn McCarthy, and Tim Bishop, along with representatives of New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton met to discuss Long Island's readiness in the event of a natural disaster with County Executives Steve Levy of Suffolk County and Tom Suozzi of Nassau County. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the delegation and county executives are evaluating the current preparedness level of the island, and the infrastructure and logistical challenges that may be faced.

"Our nation has witnessed monumental devastation in the wake of Katrina and has learned a horrible, yet valuable lesson," Bishop stated. "That lesson is to be prepared. It is imperative that all levels of government take a proactive step and prepare for any disaster, natural or manmade. The safety of Long Island's residents is my number one priority. Today's meeting is a good first step toward further strengthening our regional emergency response plan."

"Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the absolute necessity for local governments to have a viable emergency response and evacuation plan and the means to implement this plan. Today's meeting was a significant step toward meeting that goal," stated King, who was recently appointed Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security.

"The coordinated response to Hurricane Katrina was abysmal," Israel said. "If such a disaster were to strike Long Island, indecision and confusion could cost lives. We must ensure every level of government is on the same page. That's why the meeting today was so critical."

"The time to find out what gaps exist in our emergency preparedness is before a catastrophic event takes place," stated County Executive Steve Levy. "That is why this meeting with our federal representatives is so important. We all share the same goal, which is to save lives."

"Hurricane Katrina left in its path not just death and devastation, but a deep, lasting scar. And while we must now work to do everything we can to help the victims of this national tragedy, we must also do everything we can to make sure that we are prepared in the future," Senator Clinton said. "Today's meeting was an important step in making sure that Long Island has a comprehensive and coordinated response plan and I look forward to continuing to work closely with the County Executives, the Congressional delegation and state and federal governments to ensure Long Island's safety."

The meeting was organized to address areas of concern for Long Island, including the development of a seamless communication system among all levels of government, the creation of a registry to help individuals and families with special needs, methods of evacuation, and a plan to coordinate efforts of local hospitals and emergency first responders.

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